

it seemed to me that I had never met
another person on earth
as discouraging to my happiness
as my father.

and it appeared that I had
the same effect upon
him.

"you are a bum," he told me, "and you'll
always be a bum!"

and I thought, if being a bum is to be the
opposite of what this son of a bitch
is, then that's what I'm going to
be.

and it's too bad he's been dead
so long
for now he can't see
how beautifully I've succeeded
at
that.

DING-DONG

he came over with a rag around his
head, it was tied around his head
and a large segment of that rag
dangled down by his side
like a bell-cord
and it often got in his way
as he tried to light a cigarette
or lift his drink.

his girlfriend was dressed in an
all-fur outfit
that came down and covered her
feet.
her eyes were large and nice
but seemed always near
tears.
but she was
quiet.

he wasn't.

he jumped up often
spilling his drink against his
mod shirt
and he was six feet four and
worse than a bore.

it was at my place
and there were others
about.

I grabbed him by his belt and
pulled him to one side and
said: " what the fuck are you
on? I mean, buddy, you're
driving everybody crazy! do I
have to kick your ass just to
get a modicum of
silence?"

he just went on
talking

I went back and sat down.
he followed and sat down
next to me.
he was a computer engineer.

he and the girl in the
fur outfit were going to
get married.
I knew I'd never be
at that wedding.

there was a fellow sitting on the floor
across from the coffee table
who really told
interesting and funny stories
but all any of us could hear was
the computer engineer.

after not too long a time
we gave up speech and just
listened
although nobody was sure of
what he was saying

the computer engineer and his
girl
were friends of the lady
I lived with
and since said lady
would tend to say that
I usually treated her friends
badly
I just sat there and drank
as the tall one
leaped up and down
talking
and getting tangled in his
bell-cord.

I glanced over at the lady
I lived with.
she was smiling pleasantly
as he screamed his
nonentities

and I thought, if I am being
tested I am failing again.
I can't find anything
endearing in any of
this

and I reached out and
yanked his
bell-cord

still talking
his head
yanked
downward
and he spilled his drink
on me

sat upright again
and began with
more volume than
ever

only the head-yank
had seemed to clear his speech
pattern
and I finally understood what
he was saying
and so did the others

he was coming on
he was telling the world
that
I was an
antisocial hunk of
despicable shit.
brotherhood and sisterhood
would engulf my
smallness.
every man was a poet and
every woman was too

I poured him a new
drink

he picked it up and
snouted it
down

love is what mattered,
he went on
and
furthermore

RED

he runs a bookstore
just off Hollywood Boulevard
and all that part of Hollywood
is just about skid row,
the young boy prostitutes
running the streets at night;
the hard young girls, the blacks,
the disoriented children from
ruined families, they are
frightened, mean, helpless and
dumb and
all that's left of that part of
town is
Musso's and Frederick's of
Hollywood.
but Red is there too,
wily old Brooklyn Red,
book collector, survivor.
Henry Miller once said to
him, "where'd you get all my
fucking books, Red?"

Red has the largest collection of
Chinaski books anywhere in town,
probably in the nation.

he's got them stacked up on his
desk in large piles
and he's got some specials under
glass
and then he takes me into the
back room
and there are cases and cases
of Chinaski
books.

"my god, Red, I hope you don't
get stuck!"

"I stock what I like"

Red knows the scene, he locks up
at 4 or 4:30 before the streets